FAQ: Mumps

Background
On May 5, Calvin College Health Services reported the first case of a student with mumps-like symptoms. Although the initial case had inconclusive results, a few more students began to show similar symptoms. On Friday May 13, one positive case was confirmed. Calvin College Health Services has been working closely with the Kent County Health Department and the Michigan Department of Public Health to investigate the scope of the mumps exposure in the Calvin community. Although several students in the past two weeks have presented to Health Services with viral symptoms, only a few meet criteria to be tested for mumps.

Current Situation
Over the past several days, the college has received numerous inquiries from students, parents, staff, faculty, community members and campus visitors. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides responses to the questions that can be answered at this time. These answers have been compiled from information we have received from the Kent County Health Department and other colleges and universities that have experienced similar situations this spring (e.g. Harvard University).

In addition to this document, the college asks community members to refer to the mumps advisory update provided on May 13, which describes symptoms, the ways that the virus is spread, prevention practices and other recommendations. The college will continue to provide updates as we have further information. If your question is not addressed here, please send an email message with your question to health@calvin.edu.

- What is mumps?
- What are the symptoms of mumps?
- How is mumps tested?
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- Can you tell me who has the mumps so I can figure out my probability of exposure?
What is mumps?
Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It spreads through saliva or mucus from the mouth, nose or throat. Mumps likely spreads before the salivary glands begin to swell and up to five days after the swelling begins. For more information on mumps refer to this resource sheet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Refraining from public activities and exclusion from school or work is recommended by the Kent County Health Department for those who are ill as well as non-immune or immune-compromised individuals.

What are the symptoms of mumps?
Mumps is best known for the puffy cheeks and swollen jaw that it causes. This is a result of swollen salivary glands. However, milder cases may have less obvious symptoms, such as atypical ear pain and jaw soreness.

The most common symptoms include:
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Swollen and tender salivary glands under the ears on one or both sides (parotitis)

Symptoms typically appear 16-18 days after exposure, but this period can range from 12-25 days after exposure. Some people who get mumps have very mild or no symptoms, and often they do not know they have the disease. Most people with mumps recover completely in a few weeks.

How is mumps tested?
When there is a confirmed case of mumps on campus and another individual presents with similar symptoms, it must be assumed that they may have been exposed to mumps (universal precautions). At that point, the diagnosis is primarily based on symptoms and exam findings because the tests have limitations. There are two tests that are used to detect mumps. The PCR swab test is highly sensitive the first three days after the onset of symptoms. The antibody blood test is most sensitive in the third or fourth week of symptoms. If an individual is tested after day three but before the third week, there is a chance that their results will be inconclusive (equivocal) or even negative. For example, when mumps is known to be in the vicinity, and an individual presents after one week of symptoms with high fever and facial swelling in the gland area, the confirmation tests are sometimes inaccurate. These individuals should still be tested and isolated, but these cases would then be called sero-negative positive mumps, which basically means “mumps by exam only.”

How is mumps prevented?
The two best ways to stay healthy are to know your own vaccination status and to practice good hygiene. For the former, if you are a Calvin student and are unsure, contact Health Services. If you are not vaccinated Health Services will provide you with the MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine at no charge. For faculty, staff and/or campus visitors, contact your primary care physician to determine your vaccination status. NOTE: The MMR vaccine prevents most, but not all, cases of mumps and complications caused by the disease. Two doses of the vaccine are 88 percent effective at preventing mumps; one dose is 78 percent effective.

Practicing good hygiene includes a lot of the same guidelines one would practice to avoid a cold or the flu:
• Wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially before eating.
• Do not share glasses, eating utensils, water bottles, cigarettes, lipstick/makeup, etc.
• Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow if tissues are not available, and immediately wash your hands.
• Dispose of used tissues or other similar objects appropriately.
• Try to minimize close contact with people who are symptomatic. Close contact is defined as being within three feet of each other.

Where can I be vaccinated?
MMR vaccines are available through the Kent County Health Department, through your primary care physician, and at a variety of local pharmacies; students may contact Health Services at 616-526-6187.

How can the spread of infection on campus be prevented?
The early identification and communication about the first suspected mumps case prompted protocols that included:
• Isolation of the suspected individual
• Isolation of those at highest risk of having been exposed to the individual infected with mumps while contagious
• Voluntary, cost-free, mass vaccination of those who previously waived MMR for medical, religious, or personal reasons
• Immediate Isolation of those immune-compromised and unvaccinated students upon the first confirmation of mumps on campus

This rapid response along with thorough surveillance from Kent County Health Department of all suspected mumps cases significantly reduces risk on campus.

The mumps virus isn’t particularly virulent, which means that it is easily killed by the normal cleaning products our custodial staff uses to disinfect the campus. Our facilities team have
added heightened attention to disinfecting touch points around campus, including door knobs, railings, door pushes, desk tops and tables.

Fully vaccinated individuals are still at risk for getting mumps. Anyone with mumps-like symptoms should self-isolate and seek medical advice immediately. Our community is best served when every individual does their part by practicing good hand hygiene, healthy eating, adequate sleep and avoiding close contact with those who are symptomatic.

Is it safe for visitors to come to campus?
Those most at risk of contracting mumps include unvaccinated individuals, infants or immune-compromised persons. People in this group may want to consider reviewing the risks with their primary care provider and make an effort to remain off campus until the infection is eliminated (mumps is considered eradicated 26 days from the onset of last diagnosed mumps case).
Though there is a confirmed positive case of mumps on campus, we want to stress that the vast majority of our community is not symptomatic. The college is monitoring the situation closely and advises students, staff, faculty and visitors to remain vigilant in adhering to the preventative measures outlined above.

How will the mumps situation impact Commencement and other campus events?
We are aware that the end of spring semester includes a number of important campus events. We will continue to monitor the mumps situation in consultation with the Kent County Health Department and academic institutions that have navigated similar circumstances. As of right now, the college has not altered the campus events schedule and does not plan to cancel commencement. We intend to provide an update on Tuesday, May 17.

What is Calvin doing to support students, staff, and faculty who are advised by their primary care provider to avoid campus during this time?
Calvin College is committed to working with affected students, staff and faculty toward a successful finish to their semester.

Students who were required to isolate or instructed to avoid campus are working closely with Calvin's Health Services, Housing Office and Academic Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations. The Office of Academic Services is reaching out to individual faculty members to verify and coordinate academic accommodations for affected students.

If you are a faculty or staff member who falls into one of the vulnerable categories described above, and your primary care provider has advised that you not come to campus given your medical situation, please contact Human Resources and your supervisor, who will work with you to make accommodations for you to do your work somewhere else.

If you are a faculty or staff member and you become ill with mumps, we urge you to self-isolate at home during your illness and recovery, following instructions provided by your primary care
Can you tell me who has the mumps so I can figure out my probability of exposure?

HIPAA prevents health professionals or the college from sharing any identifiable information about the confirmed positive case. Given the information we have at this point, it is reasonable to assume that the exposure could be anywhere on campus.

The Kent County Health Department has not been able to identify the original source of the infection, but the current symptomatic students were showing signs of classic mumps near early May and were likely most contagious in late April. Given that symptoms typically appear two weeks after infection, we believe that during the week of finals, we may see a few new cases emerge. Health Services continues to work with symptomatic individuals to ensure adequate isolation and provide academic accommodations. In addition, we are advising students, staff and faculty to remain vigilant in adhering to the preventative measures outlined in the mumps advisory update. Those who believe they may have been exposed to mumps and have symptoms should refrain from public activities and contact their primary care provider; students should contact Health Services at 616-526-6187.